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the drama of the best period of Spanish literature has not been wholly neglected. Four years ago Professor Bourland published an excellent edition of Tirso de Molina's *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes* (New York, Henry Holt & Co.), and this is now followed by the present edition, of Calderón's *La Vida es Sueño* by Professor Comfort. The selection is a good one, for of all the dramas of Calderón 'Life is a Dream,' is perhaps the best known and has been oftenest translated. The German version by Gries (Berlin, 1815) and the English one by Denis Florence MacCarthy, the Irish poet (London, 1873), still enjoy a well-deserved reputation, and have introduced the Spanish poet to a wide circle of readers. Both are admirable and while it must be admitted that the trochaic ballad measure which is the prevailing metre in the Spanish drama, is not so well suited to the genius of the English language as to the German, MacCarthy's version can well bear comparison with that of Gries. MacCarthy, as is well known, had been preceded in 1856 by Archbishop Trench, whose analysis and translation of Calderón's drama 'Life is a Dream' and of his *auto*, 'The Great Theatre of the World,' appeared in that year. To Trench's version, it may be added, is prefixed a pleasing and instructive essay on the life and genius of Calderón, and an account of his English translators.

When *La Vida es Sueño* was written we do not know, but it must have been before November, 1635—the date of the *Aprobacion* of the first volume of Calderón's *comedias*, which undoubtedly appeared in that year, and was followed by the second volume in 1637. Professor Comfort has prefixed to his edition a short chapter on 'Calderón and his work' with a summary of the metres used in the play. An analysis also precedes each act. The editor might have stated, as Hartzenbusch had pointed out, that *La Vida es Sueño* is founded on a story which is substantially the same as the foundation of the induction to the *Taming of the Shrew*. Calderón found the story, in all probability, in the *Viaje Entretenido* of Agustín de Rojas, where it occurs on pp. 338 and foll. (ed. of Madrid, 1603).

Professor Comfort's text is based upon that of Hartzenbusch in the *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*. Hartzenbusch's text may be founded on the earliest edition of the play accessible to him,—that

in the *Parte Treinta de Comedias famosas de Varios Autores*, Zaragoza, 1636, though it is quite probable that he took it from the edition of the *Primera Parte* of Calderón, issued by Vera Tassis in 1683. It is true he does not even state this, at all events I fail to find this volume among the '*Ediciones que se han consultado para esta*,' a list subjoined to Vol. iv, in the ed. of the *Biblioteca*. Nobody, so far as I know, has gone back to the original edition of 1635, which, as it was published by Calderón's brother Joseph, undoubtedly contains an authentic text. This is due to the extreme rarity of the volume—which is wanting in the National Library, Madrid, but of which copies are still extant, as one was offered to the writer years ago by a Paris bookseller. Professor Comfort's edition is an excellent one; it is done with great care, and the notes—which are given at the foot of the page,—are judicious and evade no difficulty of the text. A vocabulary concludes the volume, which is a welcome addition to our Spanish texts.

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FRENCH DICTIONARIES.

EUGÈNE RITTER: *Les Quatre Dictionnaires français*. Genève: Librairie H. Kündig, 1905. Pp. 243.

This book is an example of what may be accomplished by working methodically and reading with care. Having for many years had a work of this sort in mind, Professor Ritter has, in the course of his wide reading, been in the habit of noting the uses of words as they appeared to his keen eye to be of special interest. The result is that this important contribution to French lexicography has gradually and almost insensibly been prepared, at the same time that the author was busy with his work as a professor and with writing other books.

In the first part of the work, we have a critical estimate of the four great French Dictionaries, the *Academy*, *Litttré*, *Hatzfeld* and *Darmesteter*, and *Godefroy*. The greatest space is, naturally, given to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*. The

author gives a very interesting account of the problems and difficulties which confronted the first editors and of their methods of procedure. Owing chiefly to the number of editors and to their having equal authority, the progress was necessarily slow, and when the end of the alphabet was finally reached after forty years' labor, the work was found to be so uneven that a general revision was needed before the dictionary could be published. This revision lasted nearly twenty years.

Professor Ritter gives us an amusing glimpse of the troubles of l'abbé Furetière, the Academician who was opposed to the somewhat narrow scope of the dictionary of the Academy and dissatisfied with its slow progress. He resolved to write a dictionary himself in opposition to that of the Academy and in due time the work was ready for the printer. In spite of his ingenious tricks, the abbé was unable to publish his work, owing to the fact that the Academy had obtained the exclusive privilege of printing a dictionary. Furetière was finally expelled from the Academy and spent his last years in writing pamphlets criticising his former associates. His dictionary was published in Holland after his death, and it has been re-edited several times.

A very interesting bit of dictionary history is the story of how the aged Voltaire, whom the Academy had elected its director by acclamation upon his triumphal arrival in Paris in 1778, immediately made the "Immortals" vote to revise the dictionary according to his own ideas. Within a month, before the plans for the revision were formulated, Voltaire was dead. Professor Ritter comments: "g'avait été de la part du viellard, si l'on ose le dire, un trait d'étourderie sénile."

The immense advantage which a dictionary like that of the Academy possesses over those compiled by a single individual, that of Samuel Johnson, for example, is, that it is faithful to its traditions and that it perpetuates itself, being always controlled by the best writers of each succeeding epoch. It is this circumstance which has given the dictionary of the Academy the great authority which it at last fully acquired in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The dictionary of the Academy is weakest in its definitions. Hatzfeld has, in his excellent work, improved upon many of these, while he is himself

occasionally guilty of the syllogistic circles which he tries to avoid.

The great dictionary of Littré is frequently at fault in its etymologies and the citations might be made still more numerous.

These three dictionaries Professor Ritter regards as standard works which only need to be revised from time to time. The work of Godefroy, on the other hand, ought, he thinks, to be entirely rewritten on another and better plan. It has, however, the merit of being the only one of its kind.

In the second part of his work (pp. 47-248), Professor Ritter gives us his contribution to lexicography. Sometimes it is a more accurate definition or derivation than the dictionaries give, sometimes a quotation showing an earlier use of a word than that given by Hatzfeld, sometimes again, a quotation for a word for which Littré had found no authority, etc.

It would be of interest, if space permitted, to give some specimens of these valuable quotations and subtle remarks; for example, concerning the revolutionary calendar or the word *être* as a term of genealogy, or about *le moment psychologique, romantique, génie*, or on the position of the relative *qui*, etc.

Les Quatre Dictionnaires français is a valuable and interesting work which will undoubtedly be much appreciated by all those interested in the study of the French language.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

A MODERN WELSH PARALLEL TO THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT, LL. 318-416.

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS:—It would be much to expect of romancers that they should have an eye even faintly single for exact knowledge. It is, however, regrettable that the author of a recently published Old Romance¹ (drawn we are told from

¹ *Heart of Wales*. By Allen Raine. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1905.